

An Attempt to Help Japanese EFL Student Writers Make the Transition from the Knowledge-Telling Model to the Knowledge-Transforming Model of Writing¹

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Abstract

The paper argues that more attention should be paid to the effective use of written English in Japan, where English is taught as EFL. The paper then notes that some of the problems found in descriptive and argumentative compositions by Japanese college EFL students originate from their over-reliance on the knowledge-telling style of writing, in which pieces of information are written down without any overall structure. To solve these problems, a facilitative instructional method is offered to help the students to make the transition from the knowledge-telling mode to the knowledge-transforming mode of writing. The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of reconsidering the ways of teaching effective written communication in English in Japan.

1. Introduction

Since the approach called Communicative Language Teaching overtook the Grammar Translation Method in Japan, the word “communication” has been almost exclusively equated with the fluent use of spoken English, and the effective use of written English has been unduly neglected. However, considering the social and linguistic context in Japan, where English is not used in daily life and thus functions as a foreign language (EFL), written English has a more significant role than spoken English. Not only college writing instructors but also business people are aware of

the importance of communication in written English (Kamimura, Oi, Matsumoto, and Kumamoto, 2007).

The present paper attempts to explore the problems in compositions produced by Japanese college EFL students and search for some facilitative instructional methods to solve these problems. The paper deals with two modes of writing, i.e., description and argumentation.

2. Sample compositions and writing problems

The following two sample compositions were written by two Japanese college EFL students at the lower-intermediate level of English proficiency. All errors are kept intact. Sample 1 by Student 1 is a descriptive composition that illustrates a person, named David Brown. The writing prompt given to the student was the following:

You were expected to pick up an American gentleman at Narita Airport. His name is David Brown. Figure 1 is a drawing of David. However, you had a cold, and you must ask your friend Jim to pick up David. Since Jim has never met David, you need to describe what David looks like so that Jim can identify him correctly at the airport. Study the drawing of David Brown and write to Jim an e-mail in which you describe David.

Sample 1:

He has an umbrella in his right hand.
He has a briefcase in the other hand.
He is fat.
He has a round face.
He is wearing glasses.
He is about 160cm.
He has bald hair.
He is wearing striped shirt.
He has moustache and beard.
He has thick lips.

Figure 1



Taken from Oi, Kamimura, & Sano, 2009, p. 23

Sample 2 is an argumentative essay produced by Student 2 when she was given the following prompt:

Some people argue that it is better to live in an urban city. Others believe that it is better to live in the country. Which position do you take? Give specific reasons to support your position.

Sample 2:

I will take urban city. When I was living in the country, I really wanted to live in an urban city because urban city has a lot of shops that I can buy anything I want, but in the country, there are few shops where I can go.

But in the country, I can see a lot of natures such as trees or flowers much more than an urban city, so I think it's a good place too.

Anyway, I'm living in an urban city now and I really enjoying living here, but sometimes I want to go back to my home where my family is living now.

Sample 1 has no organization as a paragraph; it is reduced to a string of simple sentences. It seems that the writer of this sample looked at the illustration and simply wrote what he paid attention to. Though Sample 2 is expected to be argumentative, it results in an anecdote because what the writer uses to support her position is not logical reasoning, but rather, her personal experience. Moreover, although she argues for an urban life at the beginning of the essay, she starts to argue for a rural life in the middle, and concludes by supporting both positions.

Both Sample 1 and Sample 2 are writer-based prose (Flower, 1979), and the writers of these samples lack audience awareness. It is questionable whether Sample 1 could enable the imaginary reader, Jim, to successfully identify David Brown at the airport. Similarly, the argument in Sample 2 is not persuasive enough, because the readers cannot share the same experiences that the writer has had.

3. The knowledge-telling model vs. the knowledge-transforming model of writing

Sample 1 and Sample 2 both correspond to what Bereiter and Scardamalia

(1987) called the knowledge-telling mode of writing. According to Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), there are two kinds of writing models, one of which is the knowledge-telling model used by novice writers. In this type of writing, writers keep on writing by telling what they already know about an assigned topic and by attending only to the text they have written so far. The other kind is the knowledge-transforming model employed by experienced writers, in which the writers set a goal and attempt to reach the goal in a problem-solving manner by structuring and restructuring their knowledge about the topic as well as the content of the composition.

Several past studies have pointed out that writing produced by novice Japanese EFL writers tends to draw on the knowledge-telling mode of writing (e.g., Kamimura & Oi, 2006). One of the reasons for this tendency is that in Japan systematic writing instruction has not been provided in L1 as well as L2 writing classrooms. Sammori (2004, 2008) argues that Japanese students are not given enough training in language arts in Japanese, that is, training in how to organize their ideas and express them in a logical manner. The result of the survey conducted by Kamimura (2005) attests to her argument. In this survey, Japanese college EFL students were asked whether they had any experiences in writing beyond the sentence level in Japanese as L1, and if they had, what kinds of writing they had produced. As can be seen in Table 1, only three students (.14%) reported that they had written an academic essay on a specific topic. The type of composition that the students had produced most frequently was found to be “*kansobun*,” a type of writing in which students write their personal impressions or comments after reading an assigned book.

The same students were also asked whether they had any writing experiences in producing composition beyond the sentence level in English as L2, and if they had, what kinds of compositions they had ever written. Table 2 summarizes the result of the survey.

Table 1: Japanese college EFL students' writing experiences in Japanese as L1
($n=22$)

Writing experiences in L1 and types of writing		
No		2 (9.09%)
Yes		20 (90.91%)
<i>Kansobun</i>	13 (59.10%)	
Letter	1 (4.55%)	
My future	1 (4.55%)	
Description of a scene in a story	2 (9.09%)	
Summary	3 (13.64%)	
Book report	3 (13.64%)	
Short essay on a specific topic	3 (13.64%)	

Table 2: Japanese college EFL students' writing experiences in English as L2
($n=22$)

Writing experiences in L1 and types of writing		
No		14 (63.64%)
Yes		8 (36.36%)
Diary	1 (.05%)	
Letter	1 (.05%)	
My hobby	1 (.05%)	
My future	2 (.09%)	
My hometown	1 (.05%)	
What I did during the summer vacation	2 (.09%)	
Japanese culture	1 (.05%)	
Japanese lunchtime	1 (.05%)	
Summary of a story	2 (.09%)	
Reaction to what they were taught in class	2 (.09%)	
Short argumentative essay	1 (.05%)	

More than 60% of the students had no experiences in producing compositions beyond the sentence level in EFL. Those who had a few experiences, if any, stated that the majority of the topics for compositions were subjective in nature, basically inducing the students' personal experiences (e.g., "What I Did During the Summer Vacation") and preferences (e.g., "My Hobby").

Sammori (2008) maintained that, in English discourse, why-questions, which demand the provision of reasons, are often used, and Japanese students are likely to be perplexed, because they are not accustomed to this type of question. Also Watanabe (2004) introduced an American writing instructor's comments in which he said that Japanese students' essays are difficult to read, because causal relationships are not clearly stated and because the students heavily rely on the transition word "and" instead of "because." Furthermore, Matsumoto and Kumamoto (2005) empirically examined Japanese EFL students' misuse of cause-effect conjunctives. These research results all suggest that Japanese students' writing is based on the knowledge-telling model rather than the knowledge-transforming model.

From a wider cultural perspective, Hyland (2003) stated that the concepts of teaching and learning vary across cultures, and different cultures have different attitudes to knowledge. He claimed that these different attitudes to knowledge results in the knowledge-transforming mode of writing in Western cultures and the knowledge-telling mode in Asian cultures, saying as follows:

Educational processes in Western contexts tend to reinforce an analytical, questioning, and evaluative stance to knowledge, encouraging students to criticize and recombine existing sources to dispute traditional wisdom and form their own points of view. In writing classes students are often asked to analyze problems, reflect on arguments, and rework their ideas through recursive redrafting. Thus, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) characterize mature writing as "knowledge-transforming," where writers actively seek to elaborate and refine available knowledge. Many Asian cultures, however, have a very different perspective that favors conserving and reproducing existing knowledge, establishing reverence for what is known through strategies such as memorization and imitation. Both these strategies demonstrate respect for knowledge, but many seem to the writing teacher like reproducing others' ideas. In Bereiter and Scardamalia's terms, it is "knowledge-telling," which represents

immature writing, where the writer's goal is simply to say what he or she can remember based on the assignment, the topic, or the genre. (p. 38)

Thus, Japanese EFL students are educated in the cultural milieu where knowledge is considered to be passed on instead of being analyzed, and they are also given little training in analytical use of language in both their L1 and L2. These backgrounds lead them to produce the knowledge-telling type of writing; therefore, a facilitative instructional method that could enable them to make the transition from the knowledge-telling to the knowledge-transforming type is urgently needed.

4. What is “communicative EFL writing?”

As stated before, although Communicative Language Teaching has stressed the use of fluent spoken English, the communicative use of written English should not be undervalued. Then a question arises: what is “communicative EFL writing”? We often simply associate communicative writing with a non-academic type of writing, such as business letters, telephone messages, faxes, and e-mails. However, in this paper, communicative EFL writing is conceptually defined as a type of writing in which (1) one's ideas are first generated and (2) transformed to be easily understood by an unknown audience, and then (3) they are expressed (4) in written EFL. The first two components are related to critical thinking activities, while the latter two are concerned with writing activities. In traditional EFL writing classrooms in Japan, much attention has been paid to teaching how to construct correct sentences in English. However, how to generate, organize, and reformulate ideas, i.e., critical thinking activities, should be more emphasized.

5. A facilitative instructional method

The following sections present an instructional method that is designed to help Japanese college EFL students shift their writing from the knowledge-telling style to the knowledge-transforming style.

The method is based on three pedagogical approaches. One is “discovery learning,” in which students learn through the process of their own inquiry. The second approach is “noticing” (Schmidt, 1990), a hypothesis that claims that “input does not become intake for language learning unless it is noticed, that is, consciously registered” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 365). The third approach is the one based on the notion of process-oriented writing. This approach holds that writing is a recursive process in which drafts are constantly modified through revision until a writer can express his/her intended message (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981). The instructional method deals with two modes of writing: description and argumentation. For each mode, several exercises are offered, with increasing levels of complexity in terms of both thinking and composing processes required; moreover, the exercises in the first half of each section focus on writing at the sentence and paragraph levels, whereas the second half concerns writing at the essay level. The instructions, aim, and possible answers are provided for each exercise.

5.1 Description

The first group of exercises aims at developing the students’ ability in producing accurate description. Exercises 1 and 6 are based on those in Tanaka (2007), but substantial additions and modifications have been added to suit the purpose of the present study.

5.1.1 From sentences to a paragraph

Exercise 1A: Guessing game (for discovery and noticing)

Instructions: You will hear six sentences as clues. What or whom do these sentences describe? When can you arrive at the answer? Give the sentence number that led you to the answer.

You will hear:			
Question 1		Question 2	
What is it?		What is it?	
1.	It is a country.	1.	He was 172 centimeters tall.
2.	It is in Europe.	2.	He was interested in charity.
3.	A queen lives there.	3.	He is dead.
4.	English is spoken there.	4.	He had three children.
5.	Football is famous there.	5.	He was born in America.
6.	Fish and chips are sold there.	6.	He was a pop singer.
Answer	The UK	Answer	Michael Jackson

Aim: The aim of this exercise is to get students to think on why Question 1 is easier to answer. Through this “discovery” exercise, the students can “notice” that, when the most general piece of information is first given and then more specific pieces follow it, the audience’s cognitive load for information processing is alleviated.

Exercise 2A: Writing sentences

Instructions: Write sentences in which you describe a thing or a person (persons).

Example:
Sushi

Sushi is a traditional Japanese food. —————→ general

It is made of rice.

The rice is shaped into portions by hand.

Slices of raw fish are put on the rice.

They are toppings.

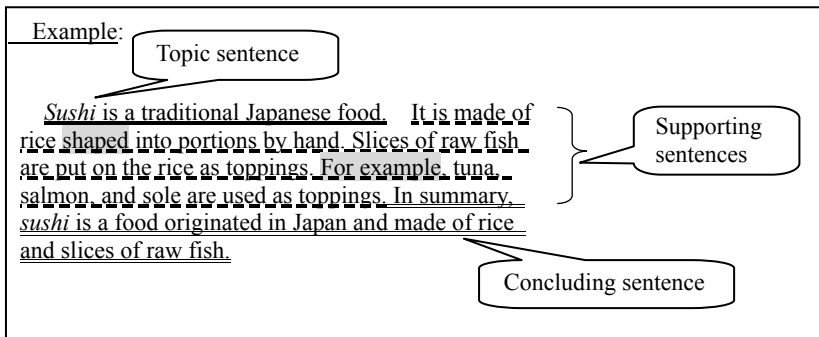
Tuna, salmon, and sole are used as toppings.

} specific

Aim: In this exercise the students are told to pay attention to writing the most abstract and general sentence at the beginning, followed by sentences that provide specific information about the topic.

Exercise 3A: Paragraph writing

Instructions: Combine the sentences you wrote in Exercise 2A and make them into a paragraph. Write a sentence at the end of the paragraph to summarize what you have written.



Aim: The students are led to write a short paragraph that consists of three parts, i.e., a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Short sentences are combined into a longer sentence through such sentence combining techniques as adding a transition (“for example”) and using a past participle adjectivally (“rice *shaped* into portions by hand”). A paragraph can be completed by adding a sentence at the end that summarizes the preceding sentences.

5.1.2 From a paragraph to an essay

Exercise 4A: Drawing (for discovery and noticing)

Instructions: You will hear several sentences that describe John White. Draw a picture of John White according to what you hear. After finishing the drawing, think about how easy or difficult the task was.

Aim: Figure 2 illustrates John White. If the students try to illustrate this person by following the instructions they hear, they will get a confused drawing, as is shown in the sample drawing in Figure 3. This exercise makes the students aware of the difficulty in drawing a precise picture when they are given pieces of information in an incoherent way. Pieces of information should be provided as separate chunks in a certain order, such as from general to specific, or from top to bottom.

Example (Sample 3):

1. John White has a moustache.
2. He has an umbrella in his left hand.
3. He is wearing checked pants.
4. He has a big mouth.
5. He is about 180 centimeters tall.
6. He is wearing a polka-dotted T-shirt.
7. He is wearing sunglasses.
8. He is in his twenties.
9. He is slender.
10. His face is square.
11. He has a shopping bag in his right hand.
12. He has sneakers on.
13. His hair is long.
14. He has a white shirt on.

Figure 2
Complete Drawing of John White



Figure 3
Sample Drawing



Exercise 5A: Analysis

Instructions: Read each of the sentences you have just heard. First, categorize the sentences into groups labeled either “general appearance” (i.e., gender, age, height, and build), “face,” “clothes,” or “belongings.” Then think about which group should be explained first, second, third, and so on.

Example (Analysis of Sample 3):

You will hear:

Sentence	Feature	Group order
1. John White has a moustache.	(face)	2
2. He has an umbrella in his left hand.	(belongings)	4
3. He is wearing checked pants.	(clothes)	3
4. He has a big mouth.	(face)	2
5. He is about 180 centimeters tall.	(general appearance: height)	1
6. He is wearing a polka-dotted T-shirt.	(clothes)	3
7. He is wearing sunglasses.	(face)	2
8. He is in his twenties.	(general appearance: gender)	1
9. He is slender.	(general appearance: build)	1
10. His face is square.	(face)	2
11. He has a shopping bag in his right hand.	(belongings)	4
12. He has sneakers on.	(clothes)	3
13. His hair is long.	(face)	2
14. He has a white shirt on.	(clothes)	3

Aim: The students learn that pieces of information should be provided as separate chunks in a certain order, such as from general to specific, or from top to bottom. In this case, they understand that the items of information about gender, age, height, and build should be provided as a group at the beginning, and then be followed by those groups of information about facial features, clothes, and finally belongings.

Exercise 6A : Rereading of the first draft

Instructions: Read each sentence in your first draft in which you described David Brown. Label each sentence as either “general appearance” (i.e., gender, age, height, and build), “face,” “clothes,” or “belongings,” as you did in Exercise 5A.

Example (Analysis of Sample 1):

He has an umbrella in his right hand.	(belongings)
He has a briefcase in the other hand.	(belongings)
He is fat.	(general appearance: build)
He has a round face.	(face)
He is wearing glasses.	(face)
He is about 160 cm.	(general appearance: height)
He has bald hair.	(face)
He is wearing striped shirt.	(clothes)
He has moustache and beard.	(face)
He has thick lips.	(face)

Aim: In this exercise, the students are expected to check whether their description is well structured, with the most important information presented at the beginning and the least important last.

Exercise 7 A: Revision of the first draft

Instructions: Study the organizational framework below, and think about what kinds of information should be added to each paragraph. Revise your first draft and complete an e-mail to Jim.

Aim: This exercise attempts to give the students an organizational clue to structure the information they should provide.

Organizational Framework:

Hi, Jim. Thank you very much for your help. I will describe what David looks like.

First, let me tell you about David's general appearance. David is a man in his 40's. He is short. _____

Second, let me describe his face. His face is round. _____

Third, I will explain his clothes. He is wearing a striped shirt and a polka-dotted tie. _____

Finally, let me tell you what he is carrying. _____

He is unique in every respect. It's easy to find him!

Your friend,

YOUR NAME

5.2 Argumentation

This section introduces a series of exercises that attempts to foster the students' abilities to produce persuasive argumentative writing. Exercises 2B and 2C follow Sammori's (2008) "*Mondo Game*," which literally means "Question and Answer Game." Exercises 4B and 4C are based on Tanaka (2007). While both Sammori and Tanaka offer exercises in Japanese, the exercises in this section are presented in English and targeted at the development of Japanese students' EFL writing abilities.

5.2.1 From sentences to a paragraph

Exercise 1B: Conversation analysis (for discovery and noticing)

Instructions: Yoko and Takeshi are both interested in going to Canada as an exchange student. One day they have an interview. Which reply do you think is more persuasive to the interviewer, and why?

Interviewer: Why do you want to go to Canada?

- (1) Yoko: I would like to go to Canada because I like Canada and Canadian people. When I was a high school student, a Canadian student stayed at my home. She told me a lot of things about Canada, and I want to see her again.
- (2) Yuji: I would like to America because I want to study bilingualism in Canada. Particularly I wish to study immersion programs in Montreal because several researchers, such as Genesee, have pointed out that they are very effective in developing students' L2 proficiency. I would like to visit a school where an immersion program is being actually implemented and observe what kinds of benefits students get from this program.

Example: Yuji's response is more persuasive than Yoko's. Yoko's response is based on her personal preferences, whereas Yuji's claim is well supported by logical reasoning with concrete evidence.

Aim: This exercise attempts to make the students realize that argumentation becomes effective when logical reasoning together with concrete evidence is provided as support, instead of subjective preferences combined with personal anecdotes.

Exercise 2B: Question and answer

Instructions: Make a pair and have a conversation in the way stated below:

- (1) One person X will ask the other: "Which do you think is better, going to the movies or watching videos at home?"
- (2) The other person Y will take a position.
- (3) X will ask why Y chose that position.
- (4) Y will give a reason.
- (5) X will ask Y to elaborate on the reason that Y has provided.
- (6) Y will give X some evidence.
- (7) X will ask Y to summarize what Y has said to X.

Example:

- X: Which do you think is better, going to the movies or watching videos at home?
- Y: I think it is better to watch videos at home. (*Taking a position*)
- X: Why do you think so? (*Asking for a reason*)
- Y: Watching videos at home is cheaper than going to the movies. (*Providing a reason*)
- X: How much cheaper is it if you watch (*Asking a further question*)
- Y: It costs 1,500 yen if you go to the movies, but it costs only 300 yen if you rent at a video rental shop. (*Giving a further explanation*)
- Y: I see. Then please summarize your argument. (*Asking for a summary*)
- X: It is better to watch videos at home because we can save money if we rent a video at a video rental shop. (*Making a summary of the argument*)

Aim: This exercise attempts to familiarize the students with why-questions to internalize the causal relationship which is a basic principle that supports English argumentation (Watanabe, 2004). Caution should be paid in making the students refrain from using a personal anecdote as a reason.

Exercise 3B: From a conversation to a paragraph

Instructions: Write a paragraph by using the answers you have given.

Example:

It is better to watch videos at home (*topic sentence*). Watching videos at home is less expensive than going to the movies (*supporting sentence*). It cost 1,500 yen to go to the movies, but it costs only 300 yen to rent a video at a video rental shop (*supporting evidence*). In summary, watching videos at home is better because we save some money (*concluding sentence*).

Aim: Exercise 2B is designed as a heuristic activity that leads to paragraph writing in Exercise 3B. In Exercise 3B, the students consolidate their knowledge of the structure of an English paragraph, which consists of a topic sentence, supporting sentence(s) combined with further supporting evidence, and a concluding sentence.

5.2.2 From a paragraph to an essay

Exercise 4B: Giving feedback (for discovery and noticing)

Instructions: Read the following sample essay and provide effective feedback for revision.

Sample essay:

The number of high schools that do not have school uniforms has been increasing in the Tokyo metropolitan area. However, I believe that school uniforms are necessary for high school students for several reasons.

First, students can save money.

Second, if they did not have uniforms, they would have to spend more than fifteen minutes thinking about which clothes to put on in the busy morning time every day.

Finally, school uniforms could give students a sense of responsibility. By wearing school uniforms, students might be more responsible for their own behavior.

In summary, school uniforms are beneficial for high school students in terms of money, time, and responsibility.

Example:

- (1) The first reason needs evidence.
- (2) A supporting sentence which states the second reason needs to be added. Only supporting evidence is shown.
- (3) Evidence that is supposed to substantiate the supporting sentence for the third reason is nothing but its restatement.

Aim: In this exercise the students are led to consider what will make a “better” essay. They critically read the sample essay and reformulate it to make it more writer-responsible (Hinds, 1987) and thus readable for the reader.

Exercise 5B Revising the sample essay

Instructions: Revise the original sample essay according to the revisions you have suggested.

Example:

The number of high schools that do not have school uniforms has been increasing in the Tokyo metropolitan area. However, I believe that school uniforms are necessary for high school students for several reasons.

First, students can save money. Without uniforms, they would have to spend money, sometimes more than 30,000 yen, on other clothes. Especially girls who are interested in clothing might need a lot of money to keep up with the latest fashion trends (addition of evidence to substantiate the first reason).

Second, students can also save time (addition of a supporting sentence that states the second reason). If they did not have uniforms, they would have to spend more than fifteen minutes thinking about which clothes to put on in the busy morning time every day.

Finally, school uniforms could give students a sense of responsibility. People can easily recognize whether students belong to School A or School B if they wear school uniforms. Therefore, students might pay more attention to their own behavior when they are wearing their uniforms (rewriting to provide evidence for the third reason).

In summary, school uniforms are beneficial for high school students in terms of money, time, and responsibility.

Aim: In this exercise the students actually revise the sample essay according to their own revision plan. By doing so, they are led to transform their declarative knowledge of essay organization into their procedural knowledge through practice.

Exercise 6B: Rereading of the first draft

Instructions: Read your first draft and think about how you could revise your draft to make it a more persuasive argumentative essay.

Example (Sample 2):

I will take urban city. When I was living in the country, I really wanted to live in an urban city because urban city has a lot of shops that I can buy anything I want, but in the country, there are few shops where I can go.

But in the country, I can see a lot of natures such as trees or flowers much more than an urban city, so I think it's a good place too.

Anyway, I'm living in an urban city now and I really enjoying living here, but sometimes I want to go back to my home where my family is living now.

Possible revision for Sample 2:

- (1) The composition is a personal anecdote, rather than an argumentative composition.
- (2) The reasons are not clearly stated.
- (3) The conclusion is not clearly stated.
- (4)

Aim: The students examine their own drafts to check (1) whether their argumentative position is supported by logical reasoning and (2) whether each reason is further elaborated on by details or evidence.

Exercise 7B: Revising the first draft

Instructions: Study the organizational framework for English argumentative writing below. Revise your first draft by referring to the framework.

Essay Organization	
I. Thesis statement:	_____
II. Body	
A. Supporting sentence1	_____
Supporting details	_____
B. Supporting sentence2	_____
Supporting details	_____
C. Supporting sentence 3	_____
Supporting details	_____
III. Concluding sentence	_____

Aim: The students revise their first draft to make it more structured and persuasive for the audience by utilizing what they have learned in the previous exercises.

6. Samples 3 and 4

Samples 3 and 4 are final drafts that Students 1 and 2 produced after having been given the facilitative writing instruction.

Sample 3 (Revised version of Sample 1):

Hi, Jim. Thank you very much for your help. I will describe what David looks like to you. I will describe his general appearance, face, clothes, and belongings.

First, let me tell you about David's general appearance. David is a man in his 40's. He is rather short. He is 160 centimeters tall. He is stout. He weighs 70 kilograms.

Second, let me describe his face. His face is round, his nose is flat, and his eyes are small and almond-shaped. He is bald. He has a beard and moustache. He wears glasses.

Third, let me explain his clothes. He is wearing a striped shirt, polka-dotted tie, checked pants, and leather shoes.

Finally, let me tell you what he is carrying. He has an umbrella in his right hand and a briefcase in his left hand.

He is unique in every respect. It's easy to find him!

Your friend,
Taro

Sample 4 (Revised version of Sample 2)

Some people say that it is better to live in an urban city, but my opinion is different. I believe it is better to live in the country for three reasons.

First, nature is beautiful in the country. We can see a lot of stars in the sky. Air and water are so clean. We can be relaxed in the country.

Second, people are very kind in the country. They greet each other when they meet on the street. Also they help each other.

Third, it is safer to live in the country. There are few cars in the country. But traffic accidents happen everywhere in a big city.

In conclusion, I support the position that living in the country is better for these three reasons.

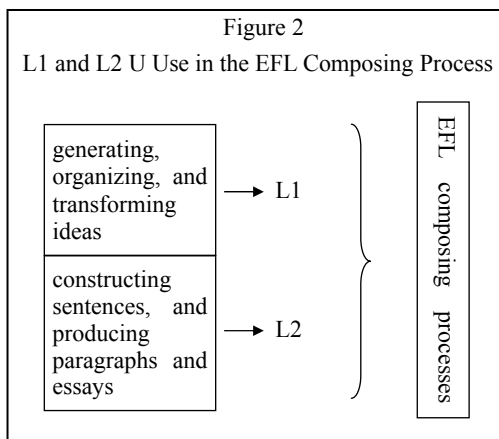
Both Sample 3 and Sample 4 are well organized as descriptive and argumentative writing. In Sample 3, David Brown's appearance is illustrated in the general-specific and top-bottom orders. In Sample 4, the argumentative position presented as a thesis statement is developed by supporting sentences in which three

reasons are provided, and each reason is logically substantiated by supporting details.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined some problems found in the descriptive and argumentative writing produced by Japanese college EFL students and also attempted to explain a facilitative instructional method to solve these problems. A close examination of the students' compositions, along with their cultural and educational backgrounds, revealed that Japanese ESL students tended to draw on the knowledge-telling model of writing; therefore, an instructional method that would help them make the transition from the knowledge-telling model to the knowledge-transforming model was needed.

The paper has provided exercises that aim at developing the students' abilities in producing effective description and argumentation on the paragraph and essay levels. The exercises were designed to help the students internalize and consolidate the way in which their knowledge was transformed to achieve the goals they had set in a given writing task. In this paper the exercises are provided in English. However, for those students with a lower level of English



proficiency, as Tanaka (2007) and Sammori (2004, 2008) suggested, Exercises 1A, and 1B and 4A and 4B could be given in Japanese so that they could fully understand the basic principles that underlie well-structured, logically written

discourse without being overwhelmed by the excessive cognitive load that could occur when they engaged simultaneously in both thinking and writing activities in L2. Namely, as Figure 2 shows, in the entire process of composing as explained in Section 4, thinking activities involving generating, organizing, and transforming ideas could be conducted in L1, whereas writing activities related to producing paragraphs and essays should be practiced in L2. Such an attempt is considered to be effective, considering two models in applied linguistics: (1) Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis (1984), which claims that learners have a domain that is common for cognitive processing in L1 and L2, and (2) Cook's Multi-competence Model (2008), which argues that L2 learners' competence includes both their L1 and interlanguage competence and thus L1 competence is a rich potential resource for L2 learning. The present paper focused on description and argumentation. More exercises for description and argumentation need to be developed. Also, exercises that deal with the other modes of writing, i.e., narration and exposition, need to be designed. Communication does not lie solely in the realm of spoken English. In Japan, where English is taught and learned as EFL, much more attention should be paid to exploring the communicative use of written English.

Notes

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